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CIA recruiter meets students; police keep protesters away

By Kate Parry
Staff Writer

A CIA recruiter, protected by campus police and protested by about 25 pickets, interviewed students for possible jobs Tuesday in the University of Minnesota's Fraser Hall.

When the protesters tried to meet with recruiter Gerald Beechum, university police refused to let them up to the third floor, where he was talking to students from the College of Liberal Arts in a private office.

Beechum refused to discuss his two-day visit to the university. Pat Volz, a spokesperson at CIA headquarters in Langley, Va., said the agency chooses several universities each year for recruiting, and that this year agents have been recruiting in Pennsylvania, Michigan, Minnesota, in the Northeast and on the West Coast.

CIA and National Security Agency (NSA) recruiters have come to the campus twice a year for many years to interview students in the Institute of Technology, according to Lee Pronto, director of student affairs and placement for the institute. The NSA also has visited the campus three times this year to recruit students who speak Russian.

Protests such as yesterday's, however, apparently are unusual.

Sgt. Jim Brundage of the university police said he couldn't remember any other protests against CIA recruiters in the past two years. Sheryl Serkissian, assistant director of the College of Liberal Arts career development office, said she had never heard of problems or complaints about CIA recruiting during her three years in the college, and Pronto said no one has protested recruiters at the institute during his 10 years at the university.

The CIA's Volz said such protests have become less frequent in recent years.

"People have a much better awareness of what the agency is all about,"

she added. "We're not particularly concerned about (protests) at all."

Asked how many recruiters work for the CIA and how many students they recruited last year, Volz said, "We don't deal in numbers; it's not our policy." But she did say that 250,000 people applied for jobs with the CIA in 1983.

The protest was organized by the Central American Working Group, composed of about 15 faculty members and students at the university.

Anne Winkler, president of the organization, said they were protesting because the CIA takes out ads in the Minnesota Daily, the student newspaper, that "purvey a false image of the CIA." She said the protest was to educate students about CIA covert activities against the leftist government in Nicaragua. "The CIA is involved in murdering millions of people," she said.

A nearby student evangelist drew a bigger crowd yesterday than those protesting the recruiter and the CIA's involvement in Nicaragua.

A CIA pamphlet in the College of Liberal Arts career development office where Beechum was interviewing students explained that "in international affairs, intelligence is knowledge — fact and estimate. In peace, it is that knowledge of the world that is essential to the preservation of peace."

Said protester Alan Dale: "What they're really doing is recruiting people to carry out planned, organized terror."

Serkissian said the intelligence agency is "our best resource for linguists." She said that all government agencies are allowed to recruit on

campus as long as they comply with Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action guidelines. "Our purpose is to provide a space for the student and employer to come together," she said.

"Keeping an organization off campus isn't a protest against the organization, but a penalty against students" who want to interview for a job, said Ken Keller, vice president for academic affairs. To ban an agency from campus recruiting would be "a 'Big Brother' approach to controlling the morality of our students," he added.

Marv Davidov, founder of the Honeywell Project and longtime Twin Cities peace activist, was at the protest yesterday. "Small as it is, it's helpful," he said, adding that the CIA canceled visits to universities during the Vietnam War because of protests against its presence.

"The Vietnam syndrome is still alive," he said, but he acknowledged that broad-based support among university students for peace protests probably won't come unless U.S. troops are sent to Central America and the draft is revived.

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